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Establishing good communication is one of the most crucial aspects in the development of new junior colleges. Therefore there is a need to study the process of communication as a science and to analyze this process in order to understand how one may improve his own communication abilities. Fundamental elements of communicatior. are (1) the person who speaks, 92) the speech he produces, and (3) the person who listens. In the relationship between a college library and the vocational-technical program, the librarian must determine how he wants to affect his receiver and must be sensitive to four kinds of factors within the source which will eliminate all elements that interfere with the intended message: (1) communications skills (writing and speaking, reading and listening), (2) attitudes, (3) knowledge level, and (4) social-cultural system. As messages travel through these channels they must be encoded and to improve communication, should have the proper attitude toward and knowledge of the vocational-technical education field, should provide students and faculty with an adequate orientation program, should select materials with care, and should keep the library open during the evening hours when many of the students have the most opportunity to use the facilities. (DG)

LIBRARY SERVICES TO VOCATIONAL-TECHNICAL PROGRAMS IN JUNIOR COLLEGES

COMMUNICATION

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Conference

on

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LIBRARY SERVICES TO VOCATIONAL-TECHNICAL PROGRAMS IN JUNIOR COLLEGES: COMMUNICATION

James L. Wattenbarger

As one studies the problems associated with the development of new junior colleges, he will often conclude that the establishment of good "communication" is the most difficult of all problems to overcome. He may also be surprised at how quickly the problem developed. As he examines the procedures of older and well established institutions he may conclude that almost all of their problems are centered around a breakdown in "communications". As he looks over the development of institutions still on the planning board he may also reach the decision that the greatest potential problem will be to achieve smooth "communications."

The twentieth century has been a century during which the speed and the forms of communication have changed more rapidly and perhaps more drastically than during any previous hundred years. This fact is consonant of course with almost every other phase of human inventiveness during this same period.

When the printing press and movable type came into common use older vehicles for communication were no longer used as before. The Town Crier gave way to the Town Gazette! When radio and television came into common use the older methods of communication achieved new impetus and now the Town Crier is back among us speaking from an electronic studio in a far off city.

The implications of these newer methods of communication have brought about a need to study the process of communication as a science and to analyze this process in order to understand how one may improve his own communication abilities.

Perhaps the place to begin this paper is to define the term itself. In a recent book which described in detail the process of communication, David Berlo[1] evaluated the term "definition" as being good "to the extent that it is useful." A definition is adequate if and only if it elicits a clearer meaning in the receiver than was elicited by the term itself.

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[1]Berlo, David K. The Process of Communication. Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1960. P. 280

Definition

A definition for "communication" is described in the dictionary as "an act or instance of transmitting" or as "an exchange of information." One may feel that this definition is good in the sense of Berlo's description only if he understands the process. As a result of the dilemma presented thereby it would seem appropriate to examine further the theory and practice of communication.

While each of us spends 10 to 11 hours every day communicating, we do not always achieve desired results. This possibility (that we may not always achieve desired results) is the center of interest around which this paper is based. There are many reasons why communication may not achieve desired results but in order to understand them we first need to analyze "communications."

Communications Model

Aristotle in the Rhetoric defined the model of communication in three elements: (1) the person who speaks, (2) the speech he produces, and (3) the person who listens. While our more modern models are similar to Aristotle's, they are now

much more complex. Shannon and Weaver[2] describe their model with the following

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[2] Shannon, Claude and Weaver, Warren. The Mathematical Theory of Communication. University of Chicago Press, 1949.

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ingredients: 1) a source, 2) a transmitter, 3) a signal, 4) a receiver, and 5) a destination. Other models describe the process in different language but all are very similar. For the purposes suggested herein let us borrow heavily from Berlo and describe the communications model as he does:

1) The communication source;

2) The encoder;

3) The message;

4) The channel;

5) The decoder; and

6) The communication receiver.

If we understand these elements we will be in a much better position to analyze problem areas and to suggest real solutions rather than stop gap measures.

Fidelity

The source-encoder must determine how he wants to affect his receiver and must be sensitive to four kinds of factors within the source which will elimimate the noise. This latter term is the opposite of fidelity and represents all elements of the model which will interfere with the intended message. In the relationship between a college library and the vocational technical program the noise may be characterized by a number of specific difficulties.

It is most important that the librarian and the vocational technical program develop communication skills which have high fidelity. We use the verbal method most often for purposes of communication. The verbal skills involve writing and speaking for the encoding process and reading and listening for the decoding process. Both encoding and decoding requires the fifth skill which is thought.

Most librarians have a liberal arts background and as a result have an above average facility with words. These are the major tools used by the librarian in encoding his communication. Often the student and sometimes the faculty find it difficult to decode the message because the latter group may not use words as their major tool in communication. The difficulty is obvious and is greatly affected by a second factor which also affects fidelity.

This second factor is the attitude of the source. The attitude toward the receiver is often the most important factor and once again the librarian may find that his background does not permit him to encode his messages in a way which can be satisfactorily decoded by the student and the faculty who are involved in vocational-technical areas of study. The attitude of each element of the model may be creating so much noise that the message is not clearly received.

For example, the librarian may desire that the vocational student learn to use the card file in the library. In his orientation discussion on library use he may select all of his illustrations from literature or political science or the humanities in general. His attitude as revealed in making these choices tells the vocational student that he is not really interested in the problems of the vocational student.

The third factor which should be considered is the "knowledge level". The amount of knowledge which a source has about his subject matter will specifically affect his message. The vocational-technical student and the faculty may lack sufficient experience with the library. The librarian may have little background

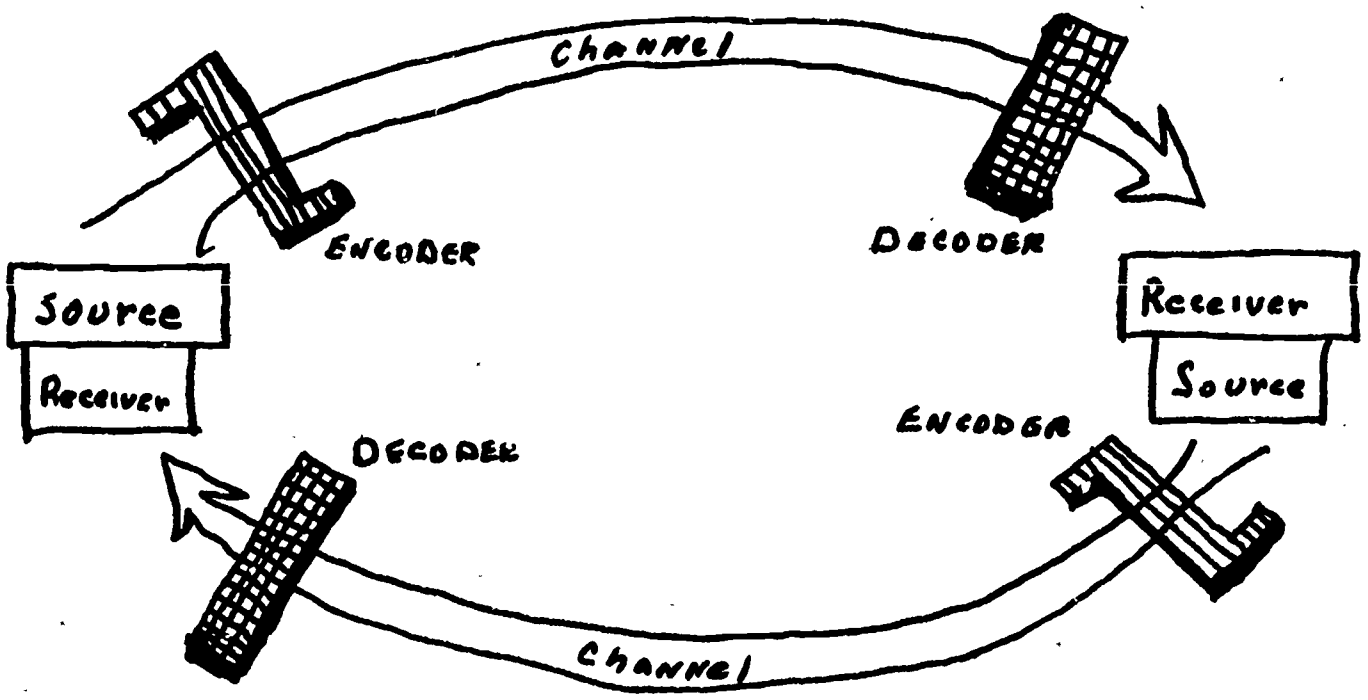
in those areas and therefore an insufficient knowledge level to enable him to encode clear messages. The result is poor communication.

Theodore Yntema, Chairman of the Finance Committee of Ford Motor Company, was quoted in the Chicago Daily News as saying that a humanist who cannot read the universal language of mathematics or who cannot read the descriptions of the world about him in simple scientific terms is illiterate. When the "illiterate librarian" communicates with an "illiterate vocational-technical student", the noise will undoubtedly be quite deafening.

A final factor which affects the noise level of communications is the social-cultural system. All sources encode their messages in relationship with a social-cultural system and all receivers decode these messages in a similar relationship. Persons from differing social or cultural backgrounds communicate differently. These backgrounds determine word choices which people make, purposes they have for communicating, meanings they attach to certain words, their choice of receivers, the channels they use for this or that kind of message and numbers of other decisions they reach in the process of communicating. A student may talk one way in the classroom and another at the drive-in; or perhaps one way in the library and another in the shop. His relationships with the social-cultural system will in most instances vary widely from that of the librarian.

It is essential that the source take into account the four factors which affect the fidelity of his communication: communications skills, attitudes, knowledge level, and social-cultural system.

It is also essential that the receiver be aware of these same factors. He who is a source at one moment will be a receiver at the next. The process may be diagrammed as follows:



The Message

As messages travel through these two channels they must be encoded and decoded before they reach the receiver. The source must select a code for his message with great care. He must choose one which is known to his receiver. He must select content which will be meaningful to his receiver. He must treat the message in terms of his analysis of the receiver's communication skills, his attitudes, his knowledge level, and his place in the social-cultural context. The only justification for the existence of the source, for the occurrence of communications is the receiver. The entire process is one which involves relationships between the source and the receiver as they relate to the various communication ingredients.

The message itself requires some attention also. It is not included in the diagram above. It must, however, travel from the source through the encoder, along the channel, through the decoder to the receiver. In the process of encoding the source decides on the content of the message and the code he will use or the treatment he will give to the message. The receiver must be able to decode the message in such a way as to understand the intention of the source.

Channel

The final element in the process of communication is the choice of channels. Recognizing that this process is a highly complex one, the source must make several choices when he selects a channel. We use all of the senses in receiving messages. It is always better to use more than one channel simultaneously if one can. For example, messages are received through hearing, seeing, touching, smelling, and tasting. Any combination of these is superior to a single channel. Radio is a vehicle which requires that messages be channeled (hearing) so they can be heard. Television on the other hand is more effective because it is a vehicle which enables us to channel messages which are both heard and seen.

Problems and Solutions

How does an understanding of this process of communication affect the solution of communication problems? If the librarian recognizes the fact that his attitude and his knowledge level may cause so much noise that the message is not received he can correct this problem. If the vocational-technical student is able to overcome an inherent antipathy toward the library, he will have taken a major step in learning how to learn. If the faculty of vocational technical subjects can recognize that he must encode his messages in a way that is understood by the librarian, he will be able to obtain the kind of help from the librarian which is needed.

The librarian must seek new channels and new vehicles for communicating with the vocational-technical faculty and students. The development of clear purposes for the library as a center for a variety of learning resources may be a good place to begin to develop good library use.

The selection of materials which are concrete may be a most important indication on the librarian's part. A number of studies have indicated that use of the library by students and faculty was directly related to the collection itself and to the services made available.

Sources for selecting materials are not the usual ones used by the academic faculty. The periodicals in the vocational-technical areas include union journals, tool and manufacturing company publications, trade journals, technical and professional handbooks, and publishing company reports. Some of these may not ordinarily be used by the librarian. He must raise his own knowledge level in selecting materials.

Examples of concrete materials include slides, photographs, and artifacts themselves in many instances. Models and model plans are also required. Some of the techniques used in museums would be most appropriate in identifying, locating, purchasing, displaying and cataloging these materials.

The librarian will need to send a constant stream of notes and more formal memoranda to individual faculty members regarding available materials. Patricia Knapp found that almost all of the student use of the library occurred in connection with course work.[3] The faculty must make specific effort to use the library and

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[3]Knapp, Patricia B. College Teaching and The College Library. (ACRL Monograph No. 23). American Library Assoc., 1959. p. 29.

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must make plans to have students use it as part of the course work. Some beginning or orientation courses may need to include information and practice in using the library.

The message must be received by the faculty and then must be encoded again and sent to the student. It is apparent then that both librarian and faculty must understand the message regarding the availability of useful materials in the library.

The noise caused by attitude is of major importance in communication between the librarian and vocational-technical faculty. The faculty may feel that the librarian does not want to understand this portion of the total community junior college program. The librarian may feel that the vocational-technical faculty does not value his services. The noise resulting from encoded attitude and decoded attitude may be so loud as to destroy effective communication. It is therefore essential that specific steps be taken to allieviate such a problem. Such appropriate actions as follow may help:

1) Make certain that representation from the faculty in the vocational-technical area is found on the library committee.
2) Keep the library open and available during the evening hours when many of these students will use it, especially those who may be working during afternoons or employed adults whose primary access to the library is in the evening.
3) Include displays of materials of specific interest to vocational-technical students in the regular display rotation plan.
4) Provide materials which encompass a wide range of abilities, interests, and emphasis.
5) Employ a number of vehicles or channels for communications messages.
6) Assure that student representation on the library committee includes students enrolled in vocational-technical programs.
7) Assign an equitable portion of the library budget for vocational-technical instructional materials.

8) Make certain the library is developing truly as a learning rescurces center.

These suggested actions will provide the receivers with a basis for developing the kind of support which will enable messages to travel in both directions with a very high degree of fidelity.